

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 and 20 are pending in this application, with claim 20 rejected.

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the allowance of claims 1-11. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 20 have been amended and claims 12-19 and 21-24 have been cancelled without prejudice. Applicants respectfully note that the amendment to claim 1 does not alter its scope, nor has the amendment been made to define over the prior art. Rather, the amendment to claim 1 has been made solely to improve the form thereof. In light of the amendments and remarks set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the pending claims is in immediate condition for allowance.

Currently, claims 20-21 and 23-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Kobayashi (U.S. Patent No. 6,633,759) and further stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Virtuoso (U.S. Patent No. 5,594,952). Moreover, claim 22 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kobayashi or Virtuoso. Because Applicants have canceled claims 21-24, only the rejection of claim 20 remains at issue. Applicants respectfully respond to the rejection of claim 20 as follows.

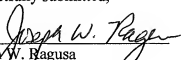
Specifically, Applicants have amended claim 20 to include the allowable subject matter of independent claim 1. Applicants therefore respectfully submit that the limitations required by amended claim 20 as shown above are neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art of record.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully assert that each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly,

the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue.

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Respectfully submitted,

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